

Electa Caldwell

1Tape 155

No date, place given; interviewer not identified

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Electa Caldwell (Electa): I think coming to Vernal, in and of itself, was sort of an interesting thing, and I have told it so many times it isn't new to anyone. I came to Vernal by chance, not because I knew anything about Vernal. In those days the principals and the superintendents used to come to the placement bureau at the universities and interview people that could be teachers for them. I had interviewed several [times] this particular spring of the year that I graduated and from those interviews I received three contracts and offers for positions. I didn't know where any of the places were at that time. One was Vernal, one was Ephraim; the other one I have forgotten, but it was in northern Utah, perhaps in Cache County somewhere. All just little places. I knew I would be happy to go to one of them.

So, I just went eenie meenie miney mo and Vernal was the winner, so I came to Vernal. It was just that simple. But I was so disappointed in Vernal when I arrived. I had traveled for twelve hours to get here. My youth and childhood had been spent on the railroads and I'd ridden on trains everywhere, and came out here on the bumpiest road that I'm sure the world ever knew.

I knew when I came here that I would perhaps meet Indians, and I was quite interested in knowing something about them, but I was just a little bit fearful of that experience; I saw a few coming out. Then when I arrived in Vernal and I looked at it, the business district maybe two blocks long, rough road, they had all the winter ruts from mud and everything. Oh, if I could have found my trunk, I would have gone back home so fast! I didn't care if I taught anywhere or not with that poor beginning, and I realized what happened within about three days...

I came out on a Friday night and met someone who became my 52- year-long, very, very close friend, Stella Oaks, and we roomed together. Sunday I went to church and I met some fine people and on Monday, of course, we were to go to school, and I don't hesitate to name a name here. I think Harold Lundell had more influence to make me feel good about Vernal than anyone I ever met. As soon as I met him and got inside of the building, the feeling of school just took hold of me and I had no more questions, no more problems. I was just happy to get into my work as fast as I could and enjoy it. So, it was rather interesting how I happened to come.

Electa: I was only in Vernal two years when.... Although I had been warned by the bus driver that brought me out here that every young girl that comes to Vernal gets caught by someone in Vernal. Well, I said, Won't. I won't let that happen to me." I was already wearing a diamond, so I knew it wouldn't. But after teaching two years, I left here and married a local yokel, and was very happy about it. That's what brought me back to Vernal through the many, many later years. We were gone for seven years, four of which we lived in Los Angeles, and from there we came back to Vernal. In about a year, the World War was on and anyone that could find his way to school could teach because everyone else was in the service. I went back to teaching at that time. By this time, Mr. Lundell, whom I had mentioned before, was my principal, so I was exceedingly happy about that.

I was there for several years in the business department. When I first came out, there was no shorthand and that was very disappointing to me because that was one my most loved subjects. So I started shorthand in Uintah and Mrs. Melba Tullis was one my first very fine students in that area. I think I can mention her, many, many people know her.

Then as the years went by I discovered when I came back to Uintah that our colors had changed, our school song had changed, our logo had changed, everything was different. I found I was in a new system. The thing that happened to me, I had discovered I had become an Indian, and we just found a whole new school spirit belonging to the Utes of Uintah. I had to learn all these new things, that I had learned to love the first two years I was here. and it was different.

I think [of] perhaps one of my proudest moments, while I still had all business at Uintah: We used to go to the business contests in Carbon College at Price and that was a real challenge because we would leave here about five o'clock in the morning. The students would be tired when they entered the contest and then we would turn around and come home that night and we must have spent at least ten or eleven years in those contests and only two of the last two that I attended did we go over there and stay overnight and go to the contest the next morning.

There was one year that we went, there were eighteen places given in the contest and we came with twelve of them. I remember we just screamed and hollered and yelled all the way home, we were so happy to have made such an outstanding record. Some of the students that participated at that time, I especially remember. We actually earned three more places than the twelve because I had attempted to get the three students who were to participate in contests in business and I couldn't single out three students. I had six that were just all on the level. So, I wrote to the college and got permission to bring all six, [asking] would he allow all of them to take the test and he could pick out before he started any three he wanted to for the contestants. He did that and the three who were not contesting placed within the first four placing scores. So, I justified my inability of being able to choose some of them.

I always had a tremendously keen spirit, what I term the spirit of Uintah, and that didn't mean exactly yelling and screaming at ball games and supporting things like that. It meant that, yes, but it also meant: do the best I can do, and all that I do, in everything that I do. Whether it was debating, whether it was the school play, whether it was chorus, it didn't matter what it was. [To do] the best one could do, I felt, was the Spirit of Uintah.

One time, one year, I felt our athletic support was very, very, very low and it wasn't long 'til one day we had a funeral for the Spirit of Uintah. Harold Hullinger was the father and I was the mother, and I still have the veil that I wore, I remember a black hat, black dress that I wore during this mourning period and somewhere on the campus of Uintah High School, which we are just leaving, is where we buried the Spirit of Uintah. We had the whole funeral and everything that goes with it. Then in about two weeks we were very surprised. There was a new spirit that entered our school and we loved it, we pampered it, we worked with it and came to have a beautiful, beautiful contesting spirit. I remember at one game I had participated in a little skit at the pep rally and I appeared to them in a blue bathrobe and I said, "You can see I just don't have any spirit at all within me today. I'm just so tired and worn out." And as the spirit grew (it was one I could untie the front and roll it off) then I was in a bright red , polka dot housecoat. The outcome [was] the meaning of those colors. I told them, "Now tonight I'm going to bring to the game a blue sweater and a red sweater and when you are yelling loud enough and hard enough for support I will wear my red sweater and just the minute things are cool you will see me in my

blue one and you can see from across the hall.” Oh, that was an interesting night. It was just more fun. They really did yell; they yelled very, very hard.

I think perhaps one of the most compensating things that has come to me, is to learn of the accomplishments of the students from Uintah. When the business department became so large I couldn't handle it all myself, we had to have another teacher. Mr. Rex was the principal and he said, “Now is the time, Mrs. Caldwell, for you to decide whether you want to have business all day, as you have had, or is there something you would like to do? We'll let you decide what you would like to do and then we'll assign what the new teacher is going to do.”

So, I thought about it for a few days and I had always loved English so much and I had almost a major in it, although my graduating major and my degree were in business. So, that is what I did. I took on an English program. Before I started that, I began to look at the records and he let me see the records of those of our students that entered college and I was disappointed in what I saw on those records. There were a few—one or two each year—would place rather high in each of the schools or maybe in one and not another. Most our students were between norm and the lower level of accomplishment. I told myself that we had just as brilliant students at Uintah as you will find anywhere in the United States. The only reason I can see for that is that they are not given the opportunity to learn the things they need to know before they get there. They are learning things that maybe are helpful to them in everyday lives, but they need something more than that.

So, I asked if we could sort of arrange our registration in English so that we had three levels. Let the highest students, the college anticipatory group, go in one group, the people who had a tremendously hard time to even spell the word English, in a group, and then have a middle group where they may be. We tried this for two or three years and the first year I took two classes in college prep and then the very lowest group. I found that to learn in that very lowest group, I had to go back to the elementary schools and get texts, 4th, 5th and 6th grades, and teach from those. But we had a lot fun in those classes and we learned, but I *really* worked hard on the college prep classes.

In the department, we talked about things that we needed to do to work up to that point, to work harder in certain areas, and by about the fourth year I was grading themes and their accomplishment and their grades on the same level I know I was graded on when I was a freshman in college. Their themes... I used the same rules and regulations. I had been a reader before I left college and I used the same rules that we had used there on Freshman papers. Within about four or five years, our whole picture changed. Instead of placing between the norm and the lower level, they were placing between the norm and the higher level. I don't say this was just the things that I did; we had to work cooperatively and do things together. The only thing I did was to offer this one level of teaching that I had as we first started. That responsibility was divided with two of us later. I started out with the first one, but I did do that and that was so satisfying to know that they would come home and say, “Oh, Mrs. Caldwell, I didn't even have to take Freshman English. I just went right in English 12, Sophomore level!” I knew that could be done and that was extremely satisfying to me. My own children found compensation in doing that, and it was a satisfaction to teach them in those classes, qualifying them for high things that they could do.

For about five years my son was associated with a firm in Salt Lake where there was a certified accountant who had been involved in giving the CPA tests each year prior to the employment, when my son met him. We used to be so glad when he would find our students

were coming from Uintah and that they had had bookkeeping from Mrs. Caldwell, 'cause we knew they would do well on the test and make good records. He told Lee, I have always been happy about this, so I have been very reluctant to say anything about it, but I never had a student go in for a CPA test with whom I had worked in bookkeeping that ever failed it. They would always pass within the first three attempts and many others would take many times.

The very year I was out here, I taught a student that by Thanksgiving had covered every bit of work that could be covered for the whole year by a high school student, the whole course of study. So I spent the rest of the year corresponding with the publishers of our textbooks getting more business projects, more textbook experiences that he could work with, and by the time he left my classroom as a senior at Uintah and the time he entered accounting at Harvard, he didn't take any other bookkeeping than the year he had as a student here. He made an excellent record and came back to teach accounting for years prior to his death at the University of Utah. So I knew we had students here. They are here just as well as they are anywhere. But will somebody seek them and teach them and help to reach the goals they want to reach?

One or two interesting experiences from the viewpoint of sports. The year that my youngest son was on the football team and every other activity, they called each other by their first names. I used to always do something to scare up some interest on the football field. This year I had gone to the drama department and got my long, black tails and black silk hat and white high collar and out I went on the football field and just paced up and down on the side of the field along with the coach. I don't why he put up with me, but he just let me do my business. All of a sudden, one of the boys, speaking to my son, [said, "There's] Electa! Look over there!" Oh, there I was just traipsing up and down the field and he was so embarrassed he could have died. We had fun out it.

Then just two or three years before I retired, Mr. Petty was our principal. We were going to play Union that night and our rival of all rivals was Union. I hadn't seen a poster in the hall. I hadn't seen anything to let me know that anybody knew we were going to have a game that night. There had been no pep rally; there was no announcement on the intercom. No one knew there was going to be a game, no one had a word to say about it. I taught straight through the day 'til seventh hour, which was my preparation period, and by that time I was so riled up, I'll never know what got hold of me and I'll never how Mr. Petty put up with it. But I started in the room across the hall from me and I went straight down the hall and opened every door of every classroom. I would say, "Who are we going to play tonight?" And they would come back, "Union." "Well, let's prove it!" Then I would start down the hall and the band followed me and all the classes in every room. We all came out and gathered right there in the center section and yelled and hollered. From the time I opened the first door until they were all back in their classrooms was about twenty minutes. I can see Mr. Petty, yet, standing there in the door of his office with his hands in his pockets, just looking up and down the hall. Pretty soon he went back up the hall and we all went back. After I sat down, I was just shaking like a leaf. Anyhow, we knew we were going to have a game that night and we won. Through those last years, I was very much concerned about the Spirit of Uintah in many different ways.

I'm well aware of my former students in just little daily experiences to this day. During this past week... For example, the mail isn't delivered to my home until about 3:30 or 4 o'clock. I have had a post office box all my life, and so I'm not accustomed to thinking about going to see if there is any mail in the box. Day after day I won't think about it. Maybe I will go for a couple days, then I'll go see. But this particular day, I just happened to look out the window and notice

the box and noticed it was about four o'clock. "I'll go see if there is any mail." And as I stepped out the door, wearing bifocals makes me very aware of steps, I don't space for them well, so I was looking down as I went out of the front door and started across the lawn. It isn't very far to the mailbox in front of where I live. By the time I really looked up I was at the box, right on the sidewalk and there sat the delivery vehicle from the post office department and the girl looked up and smiled. She said, "I didn't want say anything, because I knew I would frighten you, 'til you looked up. Here is your mail, Mrs. Caldwell." I looked up and I recognized a face that I had taught at sometime. I have no idea who she was. I'll call on the phone, maybe to get some help for my car and talk about things I need to know, never identify myself. "Now Mrs. Caldwell, I don't know if we can take care of it today, but let me see what we can do and I'll call you back."

I had occasion to have some errors, or at least I thought there was an error on my light bill and I couldn't understand what it was, so I went down to the Utah Power Light office not very long ago and I hadn't been to their new location. When I arrived, I sat down at the desk for the girl to look at the bills that were involved with my moving this summer. "Well, Mrs. Caldwell, we'll see that this gets fixed up for you." I looked at her and she said, "I know you don't remember me." And I said, "Yes, your face is familiar, but that's all." I can't remember, out of about 6,500 that I've taught, there aren't very many names and faces that I put together.

Day before yesterday I was in Smith's and as I checked out at the counter, I wrote out a check to pay for my purchases and in so doing I had the checkbook out and I had a pen out and I had laid the things down. As I walked away from the counter, the lady behind me said, "Mrs. Caldwell, you left your pen." So everybody still knows me, but I don't know who all of them are.

Interviewer: Why don't you go back to where you were telling us about lawyers and different types of students that you have taught.

Electa: Well, I sat here last night thinking about that. Well now, let me think of various professions and see if I know students who were there. So I just started writing down... I don't why I began with the military, because that's not the most important to us, but I did. My son and many of my acquaintances have had at least a partial career in the military. And the first thing I knew, I had 10 or 15 names who are either colonels or they are making careers of the military. I jumped from there to thinking of people in universities and the work they might do.

We have a university president in Colorado. I couldn't tell you how many administrative and professorships are being held by graduates of Uintah. My own son is at the BYU and we have many in each of the colleges in the locals schools in the State. So far as lawyers are concerned, I can think of lawyers all over the United States, one in Washington, D.C., several in Salt Lake.

Interviewer: Are there some names that people would recognize?

Electa: I will tell some of these names as I complete the groups. Here again I have a son who is a lawyer. We had, until about last week, five local dentists that are former students of mine. There are four now, one has moved. Politicians we know from our late primary elections, about our local politicians, and I've taught those. Pharmacists, we have locally and elsewhere. In the ecclesiastical field, we had people who achieved very highly in their positions. Here again, if I may do so, my own son just returned from spending three years in Louisiana as a mission

president. We have an apostle in the LDS church from my former students. Individual businesses all over the place. Start and stop successful. Some that are not. Secretaries. I shall never forget. I can't remember his first name, the first boy I had in shorthand as we went through school. He was just a whiz, he just did really well. About a year after he graduated, he came to see me and told where he was working. As I remember, he was in Arizona at the time. This would have maybe twenty years ago, and \$675.00 for a secretary at that time, even yet it is a very good salary, but at that time it was absolutely outstanding. Haven't heard anything from him for a long time.

Glade Calder is perhaps one of the first names that comes to mind in the career in the military. He has done very well. Gordon Gee, our university president in Colorado. Now I don't know if he is *the* president or one of the presidents of the school. I'm not sure. But he came from the University of Virginia as a president, then came to Colorado a year or so ago.

Our local dentists, Dr. Spendlove, two Doctors Jolley, we have had until the last couple of weeks two Doctors Jensen. I understand Louis has moved to Provo. Professors and administrative: Billy Siddoway has been at the Y for a long time. Three or four of our principals, now that wouldn't be my students, I can think, quickly, of about five principals that have gone into administration at the Y and other colleges in Utah. Glade Watkins at the Vernal Drug, one our local pharmacists, a former student. By the way, he represented at one time, perhaps our lowest accomplishment at the Carbon contest in terms of number of awards won. We only got one that year and it was Glade. He did well, yet that isn't the work he has worked in.

Interviewer: Would you like to do a little comparison in the way students were taught back when you first started and then in the latter part of your career? Maybe compare a little bit. Do you feel that facilities make a difference the way the students are able to learn?

Electa: So far as facilities are concerned, it is a matter of it being pleasant, to have pleasant surroundings and there is an inner feeling of peace, comfort, that comes to everybody in the school, whether the facilities are nicer than maybe elsewhere. But I don't think that's the thing that causes desire to learn. I think perhaps the teachers, and I think that is true today; I don't think it's just when I was in school. I still think students will not give any less than teachers demand nor any more. They won't do their best unless only the best is accepted. Just little tiny things lead to that.

I started out each year with the first couple or three days, we would set up our rules for the year. I think they need to participate in what the boundaries are that are ours. For instance what is the day a theme must be in, or can there be a day, or can it be just any old day. I said, "Well, it doesn't matter to me. What would you like? There will be one theme a week, probably. Once in a while we will miss a week. I don't care what day they come in, nor do I care what time of day, but I do care that there be a time." And so they set their own day; they set their own time.

It was interesting enough one year. This girl had her theme all ready on a Friday and had occasion to go to school, so she put it in her locker and knew that it would be there for Monday when she came to school. Monday she had forgotten it. See, it had been too long, she just forgot to hand it in, and Monday on 4:00 was the time they had set for their themes to be in. Well, about 4:30 she came in, just tears streaming down her face and told me what I have just told you. And I said, "Well, what *can* we do about this. I can't be the first one to break the rules." We just sat there and talked about it for a few minutes and pretty soon she said, "I know it isn't right for me

to hand it in.” She picked it up and left the room. Well, this was a really, really bad experience for her. Well, if you don’t think that news didn’t scatter and scatter fast. If the principal’s daughter’s theme won’t be accepted, what chance do the rest of us have? You know, I should be afraid of the principal, I should be afraid of the principal’s daughter. But that wasn’t the situation. There was never a word ever said to me, either from her or her father. But I think as a result of that experience, the rest of the year she achieved. Maybe even almost beyond what her accomplishments might have been because she found out that, “I’ve got to plan a way somewhere that I do things on time.”

[Then there are] just little tiny bits of things to make them look better. Some of them at first would hand in red ink and green ink and purple ink just to have the fun of colors. I just let them know I only had one pair of eyes and they either had to be black or blue or blue-black, the rest was just too hard to read. And that is all I got.

I would tell them if there wasn’t a rough draft with their theme, I knew that they hadn’t worked hard enough, if it wasn’t any more than to copy it, to copy their own rough draft. But if I didn’t see any work on the rough draft, they got a lower grade on the theme than if I had seen some work. If they just tore a sheet from a spiral notebook and left all these rough edges, I used call it lace, I wouldn’t accept that either, it had to be neater than that. I left scissors on the desk and I said, “You may use that paper, but don’t give me the lace, I haven’t any use for it.” And they are just little tiny things to make things neat and that doesn’t necessarily spell ‘Ability,’ but it spells, ‘I Care.’

Interviewer: The thought occurred to me, Electa, that you must have spent many, many hours after school hours going over the work handed in.

Electa: Oh, I did. I spent hours and hours and hours. I always went home by 5:00, or maybe by about 4:30, to have dinner ready by six. But between the time school was out and five I would read hundreds of things. When I did English and in typewriting, we took a timed writing every single day, and every week I picked out the best one and that’s the one I scored. Of course, then there is the question: well, which is the best one? The one that has the highest speed on it, or the fewest errors? Well, I always picked out the one with the fewest errors. Oftentimes that wasn’t the highest speed they had, but by doing that, they wrote more accurately, and eventually the highest speed that their potential would give them, would be a part of their year’s experience. So, I just kind of went underground with little things to let them know.

I often wondered. I couldn’t understand why we had to keep stressing not being tardy, not being tardy, not being tardy. No one ever came to my class tardy unless there was a very, very, really good reason. I couldn’t tell you why that was. They just didn’t. I suppose one of the highest compliments ever paid to me in school was one day when, about 6:30 in the morning, I was about my business to get ready for school. Oh, I became suddenly so ill; so ill, I couldn’t stay out of the bathroom. I was vomiting and was terribly ill. I knew I couldn’t go to school and I also knew that the very brief notes on my daily plans which were sufficient for me would not be sufficient for a substitute, so I lay on the bed and wrote some instruction for the class. I wrote a note to the principal saying they don’t really need any instruction, every student in every class knows exactly what he should do today. But I wrote them and asked my husband if he would take them and leave them as he went to work. I just could not go.

Well, about noon all this stopped...maybe around 11:00. I had no more trouble, I felt fine. I thought, well, there is no need to stay home. If they want to keep the substitute teacher, I will just go in the library and get some of my work done. I have so much to do, there is no need staying. So I went back at noon. There was no one in my room. I didn't see anyone around anywhere. Soon, Mr. Jameson came down the hall. He taught across the hall from me and he didn't say anything other than just smiled and nodded and went in his room, then I went to Mr. Hoopla. He was in the room next to mine; a common wall partitioned our rooms and he just smiled and said hi as he walked in his room. I thought, "That is funny. Why didn't they ask me where I had been this morning?" They never said a word about it.

So, by this time it was time to get into the class following the noon hour and there was no one came around that could be a substitute teacher. I couldn't believe what had gone on, so I went on and finished. I think I had one more class before I had a free period, then I went down to the office to find out. Come to find out, the principal had not been in school until after 9:00 and he had never seen my note or my plans. No teacher had been asked to come. Here was the teacher on this side of the partition and the one across the hall, didn't even know that I had been gone, and the four walls in my room were still standing. I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it. To think that they would go in and behave themselves! Of course, I used to sometimes not be in my room when it was time for class to start, deliberately. And maybe I'd be there in one minute and maybe I wouldn't come for ten, and I better find them busy when I got there. I suppose that they didn't know what minute I'd show up, even for four hours.

Interviewer: You know, what comes through to me is your caring; that that came across to those students, I know. You staying and reading everything and really caring what each one of them is doing. I haven't understood until now why my daughter, even though she was probably the most deficient person in the world in English, really had a high opinion of you, you know, because you helped her the best you could and you cared.

Electa: I often would hear students say, "Mrs. Caldwell, I'm too dumb to do this work." That's one of the first things they would clarify at the beginning of every year. Unless they could not talk, they were not dumb, and I didn't ever want to hear it. I used to tell them, "The only thing I actually request is that you do everything that I assign the best you can do it, and if they are all F's, you still get credit. But just miss one, then I have no responsibility, that is your fault. Things like that were the rules we lived by; things that we worked for. I never allowed within the room a lot of... I didn't allow any talking going on while I was talking. I could cut a word, a four letter word, right in two to stop, and every head came up, just like this, and they'd look around to see who was the intruder, who was the one. I didn't have to ask. I seldom ever had to do anything like that.

Interviewer: In the years you've taught, how do you feel that the image of the teacher has changed? You know when you first began it was the lady teacher, usually unmarried. Would you like to talk a little about that? Do you have any thoughts along those lines?

Electa: You mentioned the word unmarried. When I was married, at the time I was married, I had a contract to teach. I was going to leave Vernal and go to Jordan in Salt Lake, but because I was married, my contract was canceled. Married teachers could not teach at that time. Well, I

knew the state superintendent of schools very well, and my husband wanted to go to school at that time and I wanted to teach to help keep things going, to be some support to our new family, so that we could go on and finish school. And so I went to talk to him and he said, "Electa of all the people I would want to put in the classroom, I would do it for you. I will see that you get a classroom, but I'll have to have you in a room and you will be on a substitute basis all year long. You can't be on contract." But before he got this accomplished, and he did, I found a secretarial position I was very well satisfied with, so I didn't need to accept that offer. I had that experience on one end of the spectrum. I was out of school 11 years and I had two children in that 11 years. I did a lot of office work in that time, too, while my husband was in school. Then the years went by and I just figured. "Well, I guess that's all there is." I came back to school, as I explained before, during the War.

I knew by about June that I was pregnant and expecting a new child, so I told the principal that maybe he better get a new teacher. Well, there was just no one to get. So, I went back to school and had the experience of being loved and respected, although everyone knew I was pregnant and I would be out of school. So, this was the other end of the spectrum. In one experience I couldn't teach because I had just married; the next, I was teaching because we couldn't get help and I was going to have to leave school to have a new baby before the school year was out. So, within those years I found that there was much more understanding in that particular category.

I don't think there was any difference in the 32 years that I taught in terms of what a teacher expected and what exactly they got. Now whether they demanded it or not... I know that while I was teaching I can think immediately of four different teachers who, including myself, all had about the same kinds of experiences. But I also know as I was retiring there were some teachers on the faculty who felt the same as I did and had no further difficulty or no more difficulty in handling their students and getting from them more nearly their potential capabilities fulfilled. I don't know what's happened. People say, "You couldn't handle it if you were there now." I wish I was 20 years younger and I'd find out.

One of our local citizens, a fine person, you'd all know him. His son had run away, I learned during the summer, and had been gone all summer long and he just wasn't going to go to school. I don't know what else might have happened. But I was surprised when school started and I found him registered in my type class and in my English class. I thought, "Oh, oh, am I going to have some trouble!" I never had one ounce of trouble with him. He was ill three times during the year on a Monday when a theme was due and his mother brought it to school. He saw that it got there. He said it cannot be late. No matter how sick I am, I've got to get it there. In type class, he became a member of my contest team and did very well in it. He worked hard in it. Now what he did in other classes, I don't know, but he certainly did well in mine.

Interviewer: So, you never really had a difficult problem, ever?

Electa: No, I had absolutely no problem, absolutely nothing happened.

Interviewer: You choose. What would you like to talk about? Something amusing or unusual that you can think back on or whether you'd like to compare the students the way they were when you first started to teach?

Electa: They would find out a comma fault in a theme meant a whole grade less on a theme. If it was an A grade, it meant that they got a B. It was such an extreme error and there were others like that. Three misspelled words meant a whole grade in a theme on a college level. Well, I split these up into A, A- B, B+, B- and I would drop one of those grades rather than a full A to B. But sometimes I'd have students... Well, I found two kinds of students with regard to this kind of thing. One would be one that just simply could not see what it meant without talking to me over and over again, then writing sentences and bringing them to me. "Is this right or is this right, what is the difference between the two, or am I still doing it all wrong?" And when they'd conquer that, the joy that would come into their eyes, because "I've conquered something. It is mine now!"

Then the other student. I had one little girl come into my room. She had never seen anything but an A in English and she knew there was nothing she could get any better. When she got C's and B's on her themes, first she was very angry, and all I could do was to tell her, "Well, your theme is graded on the same basis as everyone else's, and isn't this such and such? Isn't this, this kind of error?" "Well, yes, but I don't think it's that important." And I said, "Well, it may not be to you, but it is considered very important on the college campus and I know that's where you're going." I happened to know that she was set for the University of Utah. "I know that is different from any other school on the college basis or campus, but," I said, "you'll accept it without any question. But if you learn never to make it before you get there, then you will never have a dropped grade because of it." So, there is great compensation in seeing those faces.

I've learned and I love bookkeeping. The credit union gave me a full satisfaction for the years and years that I did that. There, you work with figures on a page and there is a satisfaction of finally getting them to balance and seeing that is everything is right. That doesn't compare with what you see in someone's eyes.

Interviewer: You talked about being so tired in the spring.

Electa: All year long we would work hard, and by spring, I was not only tired. Year after year, for many years, I was chairman of the graduation committee and we worked so hard to make graduations in which each person would have something to do. Of course, our graduation classes were smaller then. It was a goal. I don't see how in the world it could possibly be achieved now, unless it was just participating in a class song or the sort. But that was our aim: to have each person participate. I remember one year during the graduation week, three graduating students' fathers died.

The night of graduation, we had a choral choir in the graduation exercise and this boy said, "Oh, Mrs. Caldwell, I can't say that." I said, "You only have five words and all you have to say is five words in response to something this choral choir runs." Well, he finally did it and he did very well. After the graduation program his father came up to me and said, "I had the most fun of my life!" He said, "I didn't think I would ever hear my son say anything and he said five words on that program." That father died before morning. So that brought a sorrowing experience; but it also brought a great satisfaction both to me and to the boy, when I told him what his father had said.

I have found after graduation exercises, some because I was tired, some because I was on an emotional high until after graduation exercises were over and then I knew they would all go their ways and maybe I'd never see many of them ever again. That was for two or three weeks, I

would just be emotionally unstrung. I don't know, it took me five or six years to learn I could not let myself go to THAT extreme every year. I couldn't carry my own personal life and it didn't matter if it was a boy or whether it was a girl, there were more hugs and tears and things of this sort going on after graduation than you could imagine. The feelings were still there, but I had to get where I could control them. I couldn't live with that.

Interviewer: Can you think back of any amusing or heart-warming little incidents?

Electa: I don't know how heart-warming this one thing is, but I remember one year. It couldn't have been too long before I retired. The girls were hunting a skit for a pep rally and they had gone to Mrs. Gilbert. She was Miss Cowan, before she married. So they went to JoAnn Cowan and asked her if she would help with the skit. Well, good ol' JoAnn, she said, "I will do anything you ask me if Mrs. Caldwell will." Well, she figured that was the answer, you know, that's all she would have to say. It was her first year there. Mrs. Caldwell is an older teacher, she is a gray-haired lady, can't imagine her doing anything, you know? So they came and asked me and I said, "How many others do you have?" So anyhow Miss Cowan had to participate because they found out they never asked me that they didn't know that I would. I always did. I always did whatever they asked me to do if it was possibly within my capabilities, without wrecking the whole place.

It seemed I had to be two people. I had to be someone that was wholly given to a skit, wholly given to fun, then I'd drop that personality when I walked into my classroom and I was another person. I was always two people. I couldn't quite understand, but I was. It seemed that was just what I had to be. Anyhow, we worked up a little dance skit, I think there were five of us. I was in the center, there two on each side of me. When it came down to the final program, we were dancing. When it would be the left thrown high or the right foot thrown high, I had mine just opposite and here when we gave this in the program that is what had happened. So everybody was out of step but Charlie. Oh, that was funny! And scream and holler? I can hear the kids! I can just hear that roof bouncing back and forth. Here I was: I couldn't straighten it out in just the few steps we had. I couldn't get back into step, so we just stood there and laughed. It was so funny. It was a good Spirit of Uintah skit.

Interviewer asks about pictures of different building she taught in.

Electa: Yes. You don't know the old Uintah Academy building that used to be there.

Interviewer: Talk about things that may have happened in each of the spots. Something you would think people might be interested in.

Electa: When I came to Uintah, the building that stood where the swimming pool now is was only in its second year of use, so we were in a new high school. The year before I came, the year that they had used that building the first time, was the year that they were accepted in Northwest Association of Schools, and that was a real triumph for the school to be accepted by that national organization. I remember the first year that I taught, a committee came from the state to evaluate our school in all its different departments. At that time we had seventh to twelfth grades in that building.

That year I taught in that new building. I taught bookkeeping in one room and typewriting in another and I had a little peek hole between the two rooms, because twice during the day I had class in each of those rooms, one on each side of me. The rest of the day I would have one in either one room or the other. But twice during the day I had a class in typewriting and a class of something else in the other room. One reason this was done was so that we could work in shorthand. So we could get that started.

For instance, it wasn't difficult to combine second year typewriting in one room and first year shorthand in the other room. I could alternate the lecture time, the instructional time, with the study period. It worked out. So for two years I taught that way. Then when I came back to Uintah, I was still in the new building, and we spoke of it as a new building because the Uintah Academy building was beside it. By that time we had had to start to use every room in that building because of the excessive enrollment in those six grades. I had one class in the new building and I think I spent the rest of the day in classrooms in the older building. The first year I came back, I had one class in English. That was an eighth grade class. That was the only year I ever taught English, until I went into the English department as I have explained to you.

I remember that year I had the group of students that would include the age group of Glade Sowards and Billy Siddoway. They were just a very outstanding class. The class of '47, they were a very outstanding class. Classes had characteristics just like students do. The whole group. The year that my second son graduated, there were only three students whose four-year average of accomplishments in a percentile was over ninety. The year my oldest son graduated in a class of less than a hundred, in fact I think there were only about sixty-five or seventy in his graduating class, there must have been about twenty students, at least fifteen, whose averages were over 90. Their ability to accomplish, their whole social profile, everything you want to think about them, the class itself has a characteristic, the same as the students within it. It was interesting to note that.

One year we were going to take our Senior Day at the Homestead. I often participated in that. This was a year when we had a class that was given to beer parties and things of this sort. There was a certain group that hadn't signed up to go on the bus and we were not going to allow anybody to go that didn't go on the bus that year. Well, the first thing I knew, while we were at the Homestead, here comes these two cars full of kids, and they were our beer party kids. So, as they saw me, they wanted to know if they could stay and I just talked them a few minutes: why didn't come with us? Well, this and this. Well, we couldn't have beer if we came on the bus. I said, "You can't have beer if you are here with those who were on the bus, either." In about ten minutes they got in their cars and left. They knew that they didn't belong. It was no problem. I could name some that was in that group, too, but I won't.

Interviewer: Talk about anything in comparison then and now.

Electa: As I look back, so far as style is concerned, no boy would let his mother wash his Levis when they first came out. If they could wear a pair of Levis all winter long, that was great. They could not be washed. I remember the "bobby-sox" year. I was never able to figure out the girls, with legs so blue they were almost black because they were so cold. Somehow they lived through it; whether there were ever any real bad results of such experiences, I don't know. I never will never forget the bobby sox years. There were bobby sox and long skirts, sailor collars. I don't know what prompted the sailor collar, because that was not war years.

During the war, it was hard years for us because we couldn't travel for sports activities, there were no state tournaments. There was nothing to work for except what we could do. I know my husband and several others donated gas to help haul the students just to games within the Basin. Activities we could do. School was difficult then to handle because there were no goals to reach, so far as contests to work for. The achievement had to be within our own little four walls, you might say.

To compare my type room with the type room I had when I graduated ... retired. I guess graduated is a good word, too. My husband always said that he would feel that he had conquered a lot if he could ever get his wife out of high school. Everybody else got in and out of high school, but his wife just *stayed* on.

I had in the room, I think I was able to accommodate when I first started to teach, about eighteen students and a typewriter on a single desk with no place to set a book. I can't even remember now how in the world we arranged copy. It seemed like the woodwork department made us some book stands and the little stands could only be about four inches wide because there wasn't any more room at the side of the typewriter. They pushed it all the way to left and there was just about four inches they could put a book on. They would have to put it at an angle, so it wouldn't hit the typewriter. That compared to the room that I left—the type room: it was a full-sized desk, maybe four feet long, two feet wide, that you could turn in one direction and then swivel your chair around to the typewriter desk and have all the work room in the world you could possibly use, and many of those typewriters were electric. Every time I walk into Uintah Meat Packing Plant, he has an old typewriter in there on his case where he displays his meats. That's about the kind of typewriter we had when I first started to teach.

Interviewer: Do you think there is a difference in the way teachers teach now?

Electa: The only comment I can make: I did notice in my last years at Uintah. I was on the very end room at the north. Practically all the teacher had their cars parked in the north parking at that building. The bell would ring and the students would leave the room for the close of school and by the time they would have time to walk to the locker, I'd see teachers walking in the opposite direction to go home. Now, I never saw anything like that when I first started to teach. We would all find ourselves laughing and joking and discussing things of the day; maybe an hour after school was out, before leaving to go home. I did see that difference. I always used to think there were teachers that were trying to beat the children out of school. I did have a feeling that that was sometimes the case. But that didn't involve very many even up to the time I retired. When I first came out, I was one of nineteen teachers, and I think there were about thirty-two of us when I retired. So the percentage wasn't [great]. I was always in high school.

Interviewer: What were the change of theme and color before you were Indians?

Electa: I can't remember what the logo was, but the colors were blue and white. The song was... And I went to a reunion of the class of '58 just this summer and we sang this song. It wasn't a pep kind of song, it was more of a soft, beautiful lyric. Now, most colleges will have their pep song and then their college song. Well, it was this type of song where you felt inside of you a heart beat of loyalty to your school. It was that kind of song, but the colors were blue and

white. I cannot remember the logo. It is a Ute now. I haven't been able to find out anyone who does remember.

When I came back, the colors were red and white, we were Utes. Our motto was "Onward Ever and Backward Never," and, so far as I know, it still is. One of the projects of one year that I was at school we got a big white, marble U inside the front hall that said "Onward Ever and Backward Never" on it. You've seen it hanging there. Oh, dear, if we didn't have time to get the white marble. Then I brought it home from Salt Lake in the back of our station wagon, and oh, my husband was with me and I made him watch every bump that he went over. I was so afraid it would get broken before we got it to the school.

Interviewer: Can you think of any incident where you were especially happy?

Electa: One thing I can remember, it may not fit what you have said, but it is one thing I remember we started. We used to divide our graduation programs into three or four different levels and in each one we tried to bring in the influence that religion has on our lives; the spiritual side of schooling. And that's there. Until you are in school, you don't know that you meet the spiritual side of it. It is all there. There is the fun side and the social side, but there is also the spiritual side that is there. We used to try to incorporate that in some little way in our graduation program. Finally, it occurred to me: why do we do it this way? Why can't we have our baccalaureate services on Sunday, and then devote the graduation program to the other features of graduation? So I was instrumental in getting the first baccalaureate service that we ever had and the president of the University of Utah was our speaker (I have forgotten his name). I'm wholly in line with baccalaureate services. I think they are needed, but I'm glad they are put on the day where they belong, rather than try to incorporate them. Of course, as the classes get larger and larger, it is hard to do that.

I think maybe some of the thrills of my life was attending the state tournament games. I'm a little hesitant to mention this one because it remembers family. I remember one year at BYU when my third son was on our team and there were two of the players that made some of the most beautiful shots I have ever seen in my life—standing back of center in the opponents' field, they threw arched shots. They just went... arched over and down in that... My son did three like that during the game and then his fellow player did two. I just felt like I was riding high. I just felt like I was going right up into the clouds.

There is absolutely no way in the world that capital punishment would be started in any way or would be tolerated in any way. I can think of two experiences where something of that sort was necessary. In the first place it was a matter of... A completely difference reason. I wasn't particularly inflicting punishment, I was guarding myself in self-defense. I had had a girl leave the classroom that I had been concerned about. I could see that things were not just right. She seemed to be really upset or something. I left the class as soon as I could. I didn't know where to find her, but the girls' restroom was right next to my room so I thought. well, I'll look in there and as I walked in, up she came with both fists and started to pound my head just as hard as she could. I didn't know. What would you do, what would you think? So, I just took her hands and slapped her to the side of the face just as hard as I could slap her and then I led her out into the hall. I had to go clear over into the other building to get to the faculty room with her and then I said, "Let's just sit down here and talk. What's the matter?" I went from that view point. That was one experience where slapping became a real part of an activity.

Another time, early in my experience, was in my first two years out here. This girl was tardy every single day for about three weeks. She was a girl that had to ride horseback and had to leave her horse at school. This meant that she had independent travel. She could handle it some way; maybe it was unpleasant, but she could handle it. So I talked to her one day in the faculty room and she said, "Well, I know I could leave early enough, but I'm going to leave when I damn well please." Well, I slapped her for saying this. I just automatically reached out and slapped her. I didn't even give it any thought, it just happened. She just looked at me and got up and walked out of that room and for the rest of the year and on for a couple of years, she would come up on a Saturday and bring two horses. "Would you like to go riding with me today?" We would ride around in the countryside and have fun. The last I knew about her, she was training to be nun. It has been years and years since I have heard from her.

Then the only [other] experience I had like that was many years later when we were in the building that we have just left. A young man came into my classroom and he was a little bit older than most of them. Why he was still in school I don't know anything about that, but he came into my English class and about the second or third day he questioned me about something concerning his assignment, involving back work he had to make up, he wasn't there at the beginning of the class and I had told him what needed to be done and what could be done and when I could give him help if he needed it. He handed me a very, very, extremely poorly prepared paper and I told him that I'd just accept that. If that was the best he could do, then there wasn't much use trying work in my class because work had to be better than that. Well, he got mad and he said, "Damn it, that is all I can do." And I did the same to him. I had to reach up to slap him, he was taller than I. I said, "Now you can leave and when you get ready to straighten up and come back and talk to me like a gentleman, we'll talk things over, between now and then don't let me even see you." So, I didn't know what would happen to me this day. I reported each of those incidents as fast as they happened, nothing ever came of them, whether that would be justification for inflicting such things again. Swearing was something I never did tolerate. But I did have those two slapping experiences. The boy was back the very next day.

Interviewer: Can you think of any unusual things that happened through the years.

Electa: One thing that happened at school would have been in my second son's junior year, and he was involved in yearbook. At that time they used the faculty room in the old, old building. The old building would be the one we just left, and the old, old one is where the swimming pool is. It was upstairs in that building. At that time I was teaching in the Uintah Academy building and every time I had to go to the office or anything, I had to go out of, it would have been the south the door, and around to the other building. Well, as I walked out of the Academy, the faculty would be just above us in the other building. That is where the yearbook was. Often I went there while the kids were working with yearbook up there. Well, this one day as I came out of my room, I heard one of the windows go up in the faculty room and my son put his head out of the window and said, "Hello, old Lady Caldwell!" The students in the yearbook class had dared him to do that. So from then on, Old Lady Caldwell became a very loving term. It still didn't turn out to be one of meanness or ill-intent toward me, it just became an endearing term for me until I retired.

Oh, I did think of something that was very funny, too. We went to a faculty party one time down to Split Mountain Gorge. I had left my purse in the front of the car and I can't

remember what it was, but there was something in it I had to have and I asked my husband, I said, "Would you go get my purse for me and bring it to me?" He went over to the car and he was gone quite a long time and he came back and said, "You must not have brought it, it isn't there." I said, "Oh, it has to be." And I remembered two or three things that I had known I had seen it. So, I thought, "Well, it just isn't where he thought it would be. I'll go look." Like most husbands, you have to find anything they want anyway, even if it is right where you told them it was. So, I went back to the car and the first thing I noticed, it was gone from where I knew I had left it, which was in the front seat of the car. In the middle of the back seat of the car was everything that was in it—had been in it. Just all dumped there in a heap. So, I became suspicious. I knew somebody was up to some foul work. So, I didn't say a word, other than to slowly walk back to the car, and I began to look all around. I kept my eyes open from then on. When I got a chance, I said to my husband, "You watch; watch everywhere. That purse is somewhere." And then I told him what happened when I got a chance to.

Well, I suppose it was an hour or more before I spotted it way back under a sagebrush and when I pulled it out, I just yelled out, "Oh, Chell, there is my purse under that brush," so everybody would know that I had found it. He pulled it out and brought it over to me and it was just bulging on each side. When I opened it and turned it over, there fell two cans of Coors beer. From that time on, every faculty meeting, for years, everybody was notified that Coors was Mrs. Caldwell's favorite brand, and if you wanted to be really nice to her, see that she got some. I found out that Charlie Freeman had done that. So to this day, to the people that knew, there would be a change of thought. "Had any Coors today?" or some such comment.

Interviewer asks about pictures.

Electa: I have one picture that may not be in a yearbook, I'm not sure. It was taken with Superintendent Olsen, our music teacher when I came was Norman Olsen. I have a picture taken the very first year I was here, standing between these two people. I think of that one. I have another one the first day that I was at school. I think I'm kind of leaning against a post or something at school. I was just still a little bit dejected. They grabbed that snapshot that was taken of me there at school. I can think of those two I might have. That would be the first year that I taught. I can think of those two. I might have some pictures taken with the type team that I took to Price the very first year I went. That year we didn't drive to Price. Then, we went... To this day I couldn't tell you where Nine-Mile road is. That time that we went around Nine-Mile and then went on to Price by railroad from Provo, I guess it would have been. Then from Price back to Provo by train and I don't know why we would have gone by Nine-Mile. I have no idea, I just know that we did. That was the route that was suggested. I think I have some snapshots of the students that I took to that first contest team in Price. I think I have some of those. Edna Dudley would have been one of the girls, and Melba Tullis one, and I think Lela Goodrich.

Interviewer: I really feel privileged to hear this.

Electa: Well, I'm glad you feel that way. That's just it, that just the way it was. You know when fall first comes, it all of a sudden one day fall hits. To me that doesn't say fall, that says back to school and I want to go back to school so bad my teeth ache. That's a part of me.

